

The Skeleton in the Closet

A TRUE STORY OF THE SECRET SERVICE

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I HAD MET the judge frequently and felt quite well acquainted with him. He was a politician of note and a member of the president's cabinet. Because of his prominence and his one-time important connection with the government, I shall forbear the mention of his name. It would be familiar to every reader.

One day I received a message from him requesting me to call at his office at my earliest convenience. Presenting myself I was given a private interview. After a little preliminary conversation the judge said that he wanted to talk to me in regard to a personal matter. He needed my assistance in an affair of much concern to himself and wife. He then related at some length the history of his family troubles. There was a skeleton in his closet. He had sent for me believing that I might be able to devise some measure of relief.

"My wife," he said, "is very much worried and quite prostrated with grief. She is in such a nervous state of mind I fear she will break down altogether." His eyes filled with tears as he explained the cause of their great trouble. "She was a widow with an only son when I married her. This son, notwithstanding his moral training and tender care, has turned out to be an unmitigated villain and a constant menace to our peace of mind. He seems to be heartless and devoid of decency and respect for our position. Besides, he is a thief. Only a short time ago he was arrested in Chicago, taken to Baltimore and charged with committing a robbery in a house of ill repute. I was compelled to settle the case or suffer the disgrace of an exposure. Wine and women are his hobbies. He is reckless in the use of money and will resort to any means to obtain it. Even now I am furnishing the money wherewith to gratify his vicious appetite. God knows what he will do next! We are living in constant fear that he will do something to publicly disgrace us. Now, if there is any way that he can be got out of the country without publicity, if you can devise any plan to get rid of him without killing him or sending him to the penitentiary, it will meet with my approval. I think it is a case where severe measures would be entirely justifiable. Just think of it! The scapograce has gone so far in his depravity as to escort a woman of known bad character to his mother's receptions."

My sympathies once aroused and a promise made, I felt bound to take some action. It appeared a difficult undertaking. The fellow was to be got rid of, but just how was the question that puzzled my brain. I had read of many strange disappearances of persons who were never afterwards heard of, but the manner of their disappearance was not always clear. It may have been a voluntary act, mental aberration or the result of a crime. I prided myself upon my skill in devising ways and means to accomplish an end, but the case in hand, after some deliberation, appeared somewhat like perpetrating a wrong deed for the purpose of accomplishing a good result.

If the story told by the judge was true, there would be but little difficulty in landing the rascal in the penitentiary for the crimes he was committing almost daily; but a measure of this kind would mean exposure and disgrace. To put him away by foul means was out of the question. He may have deserved a sharp medicine, and the world may have been better off without him, but there was no thought of doing him bodily harm. The idea was to dispose of him and slide him out of the country tenderly. The judge wanted to get rid of him, but could suggest no way. It was a delicate case to handle. I knew that the judge was a conscientious and humane man and that he meant no wrong, and it was difficult for me to understand the course I could safely pursue.

As I turned to leave the judge's office his wife entered the room. I was introduced, and cast my eyes upon her face. It did not appear quite new to me. Could I be mistaken? Had I met her before? As the possible recognition did not appear mutual I was unable to place her.

The judge turned away to converse with his disabusing clerk. The wife, who had evidently been informed in regard to the purpose of my interview with the judge, requested me to be seated. Placing her hand upon my arm she smiled pleasantly, while assuring me of her faith in my ability to do something to help them out of the deep trouble they were in. She spoke bitterly of her son and of the many indignities he had heaped upon her. She wanted to be freed from him. The manner in which he was to be disposed of did not seem to give her much concern. She wished him banished in some far-away country; if he were dead, she would feel relieved.

While relating her troubles she chanced to mention the name of her first husband. On the instant I recognized her as an old acquaintance.

had known her when she was a rosy-cheeked young woman some twenty-five years before. She was then living with her husband in a little town in northeastern Ohio. This was before her first marriage was said to be a runaway match. She was a remarkably beautiful woman then, but there was a cloud hanging over her life. I cannot say what it might have been that caused gossiping women to shake their heads and whisper as she passed by. Shortly after she gave birth to a son she left the village. I do not know just where she went, but it was shortly afterwards rumored that she had been granted a divorce.

She was now cutting a large figure in society and often spoken of as the handsomest woman in the capitol city. Her husband, the judge, was up to this time quite successful in political life. Possessed of considerable brain force and much amiability of character, he might have risen still higher had not the intrigues set on foot by his ambitious wife contributed to pull him down. She planned schemes to exalt him and to acquire wealth. In making these efforts she aroused the jealousies of others and made the judge quite unpopular with the leading politicians. Her misdirected zeal not only crushed the political prospects of her husband, but finally resulted in expelling her from Washington society.

I was furnished a photograph of her profligate stepson. He was a fine-looking young man, with wavy hair, keen blue eyes and rosy cheeks; in fact, much like his mother in her

make big hauls." The judge's stepson took to a suggestion of this kind like a duck to water and was highly elated on account of the proposed trip. He no doubt imagined a broader field for the exercise of his own peculiar talent. On their arrival at New York they registered under assumed names at the Merchants' hotel on Courtland street.

For several days following they strolled about the city, taking in the sights and waiting for something to turn up. While walking along Broadway, near the old Astor hotel, they chanced to pass a middle-aged man who was gazing about in an uncertain sort of way. His dress and manner gave him the appearance of a green one from the rural districts, presumably from some place out west.

"Here," said Reed in an undertone, "is the very fellow we are looking for. Let us try a hand on him. I will make him think I have met him before." Reed now stepped up and accosted the green one with an air of assumed familiarity. Seizing him by the hand he said: "How do you do, Mr. Chick? I am so glad to see you." The verdant man responded: "You are mistaken, sir; my name is Jones, and I live at Fort Wayne, Indiana." "Never mind the name," said Reed, "I got the names mixed, but I remember now where I met you. You used to run a livery stable at Kokomo."

"Yes, I did."

"Then of course you remember me. I am the man that sold pumps and kept my team at your stable. You



youth. His face was indicative of criminal tendencies. I was told that he was a difficult man to approach, that he did not care for the companionship of men. This being the case I was at a loss to determine how to reach him. It was necessary to introduce a stranger in order to carry out the plot I had in view.

After pondering over the matter for some days I hit upon an expedient that I believed would dispose of the young man without public exposure or resorting to crime. There was in my employ at this time a man whom I shall call Reed. If ever there was a born confidence man he was the one; an actor that could assume a part, live it and play it through with a face as solemn as the graveyard; never vicious, but ever apparently in earnest while practicing a deception for misleading only those who ought to be misled, I had found him on all occasions to be a valuable assistant in furthering the ends of justice.

Reed hailed from the south, had just arrived in the city and was in quest of a private lodging place. The judge's stepson was now occupying an elegant suite of rooms in a fashionable location. He was so completely captivated by Reed's assumed manners and apparent wealth that he was delighted at the opportunity afforded to secure a roommate. The detective accepted the offer made by his new friend and soon found himself in quite a novel and dangerous situation. He was the companion of a thief whose exploits were liable to involve both in trouble.

He had led his roommate to believe that he was himself engaged in questionable transactions and that New York was the place to operate in. "There," said he, "are chances to

and I have taken many drinks together."

"Oh, yes," drawled Mr. Jones; "what on earth are you doing in New York?"

"Just looking around and having a good time. Let's go and take something."

"Come along, Jones. Let us go around to our hotel," said Reed. The trio went to the Merchants. Jones accepted an invitation to go to the room of his friends.

"What is your favorite drink?" asked Reed.

"Plain brandy," said Jones.

"I will go down and bring up a bottle." As Reed moved away he winked slyly to the judge's stepson. After an absence of some thirty minutes or more Reed returned with the brandy. He pulled the cork. While Jones was looking out of the window he slipped a small vial out of his pocket and, giving his partner an opportunity to see it, he turned the contents into the bottle of brandy. He gave the bottle a shake and set it down on the table. The judge's stepson's face flushed and there was a tremor in his voice. He seemed to comprehend the noxious power of the venomous ingredient that had been poured into the bottle. Reed appeared self-possessed and proficient in the art of deceiving and bold and bad enough to commit any crime, while the young man was evidently greatly frightened—not because of any compunctions of conscience, but for the reason that he was, as was afterwards shown, a natural born coward. He possessed none of the elements and rugged force of an assassin. He seemed to have a nervous apprehension that he was wading in water too deep and dangerous. He was heart-

less enough, but somehow lacked the nerve to perform.

Step by step Jones became drowsy. The stepson strove to rally him to his senses. Jones closed his eyes. What might have been a phantom of overheated imagination now became a fearful reality. The stepson was now almost paralyzed with fear as Jones slipped from his chair to the floor.

Was he dead or alive? He uttered a low and suppressed moan as his lank and livid body was laid upon the bed and stripped of all its valuables. The stepson, thoroughly in earnest, wanted to take Jones' overcoat, but Reed said it would be dangerous, as it might lead to detection.

I now leave the horrors of this occasion to the imagination of the reader. The two survivors suddenly left the hotel and crossed over to Jersey City and took lodging at Taylor's hotel, where they registered under assumed names, as they had done previously at the Merchants'. It was late in the evening when they went to bed.

They had left the Merchants' hotel late in the afternoon. Jones, the supposed drugged countryman, was not quite as dead as the judge's stepson thought him to be. He, too, was a skilled pretender.

Soon after his entertainers had taken their departure he, possum-like, came to life, got up and took a drink from the brandy bottle that was left upon the table, and made his way at once to the government secret service office, where he told the story of his adventure and received further instructions. This so-called Jones was a detective of marked ability. He could assume almost any character and deceive the best educated criminal, yet withal an honest, faithful servant to the government.

At an early hour on the following morning at Taylor's hotel Reed pretended to be taken suddenly sick with a cramp in his stomach. He left his roommate and went below. A short time afterwards he rushed back into the bedroom and informed the judge's stepson with a trembling voice that they must get out of the place in a hurry or they would be arrested. Reed said that while downstairs he had torn a slip from a newspaper. He handed it to the judge's stepson, who, on glancing at it hastily, at once sprang out of bed.

It was a sensational article and bore the appearance of having been clipped from a newspaper. As a matter of fact, however, it had been printed at the New York Tribune job office. It was a nice piece of deception and read as follows:

A Brutal Murder and Robbery.

Another of those outrageous and dastardly murders which have so recently startled the community occurred in this city yesterday afternoon, the particulars of which are as follows: It appears that shortly after dark last evening a well-dressed man, apparently thirty-five years of age, was found by the police lying near the foot of Courtland street in an insensible condition. He was taken to the police station, where restoratives were administered, and when he had revived sufficiently he stated that his name was P. R. Jones and that he was from Fort Wayne, Ind.

Mr. Jones was removed to the city hospital last evening, where he became delirious and died about nine o'clock. The police are on the track of the murderers, who are supposed to be from Baltimore or Washington, as the clerk at the hotel states that they came in just after the arrival of the Washington train. The clerk is positive he can identify them.

A frightful ghost had risen and was standing in its most horrible form before the now half-crazed stepson. The rope of the hangman was looming up before his eyes. He did not even take time to wash his face, so great was his anxiety to leave New York behind him. Even the very air he breathed seemed tainted with the foul odor of his crime. It was thought to be dangerous to travel by rail at first, and they started away on foot, and finally concluded to make their way to New Orleans.

Reed was, of course, the ruling spirit and was carrying out the plan they had agreed upon. They doubled back and forth with the object of putting imaginary pursuers off the track. Reed was seeking delay for the purpose of gaining time. When the pair arrived at New Orleans about the first thing that met their eyes was a handbill posted in the depot describing the fugitives and offering a reward for their arrest and conviction. Staring at the bill with beads of perspiration starting upon his brow the judge's stepson nearly collapsed. He was careworn, downhearted and ready to speed away as swift as steam could carry him. In the course of time the fugitives arrived at Brownsville, Tex. From this point I received a note from Reed saying that they intended to cross the Rio Grande and work their way to the City of Mexico.

To the minds of the detectives who played their part in this case the whole affair appeared a farce.

After a time Reed returned from Mexico. He had given his companion the slip and was quite positive in his opinion that the judge's stepson would never dare show his face in the United States. He declared the man was about the greatest coward he had ever met with.

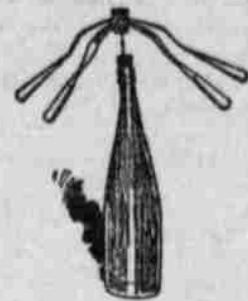
Reed was correct in his opinion, as the fugitive, so far as I know, has never been heard of. He certainly did not appear in Washington to further annoy the judge and his wife. He may still be running from a Nemesis that will never overtake him.

CORNER FOR THE JUNIORS

BALANCING FEAT WITH FORKS

How Several Common Table Articles May Be Placed to Perform Rather Odd Tricks.

Several common table forks can be made to balance on a pin head in this way: Procure an empty bottle and insert a cork in the neck. Stick a pin in the center of this cork so that the end will be about one and one-half inch above the top. Obtain a second cork about one inch in diameter by one and three-fourth inches long. The forks are then stuck into the latter cork at equal distances apart, each having the same angle from the cork. A long needle, with a good, sharp



A Balancing Feat.

point, is run through the cork with the forks, and one-half inch of the needle end allowed to project through the lower end. The point of the needle should then be placed on the pin head. The forks will balance, and if given a slight push they will appear to dance. Different angles of the forks will produce various feats of balancing.

MANY TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

Italian Linguist Searching for Woeing Language of All Races—Chinaman Says "No Ugi Ni."

A noted Italian linguist, Professor D'Ozza of Genoa, has started a highly original work, which is the subject of considerable comment by the comic weeklies of Europe and is expected to be read with interest by linguists. It is to be a volume containing all the people of the world, savage and civilized.

The Parisian Le Rire remarks:

"How poetically the old expression 'Je aime vous'—I love you—sounds in the language of the young Greenland, according to the professor's dictionary of love. Take a full breath and then whisper Unifgraerndlnalerfronafungrarrigajak."

The Chinaman simply says "No ugi ni." One tribe of Indians express their feelings with "Main sym kapslar karin." A tribe in Africa is sparing of words, the lover sticking his tongue out and remarking "Aha." The Arab declares himself with one word—"Nehabbeck," while the Turk whispers, "Sidi sevelorum." The Armenian plainly says, "So sirem es hez." In South America is a tribe of Indians that do not waste words on their beloved. Having made his choice the swain grabs the object of his affection by the nose and pulls her along with him.

GAME WITH GOOD EXERCISE

"Do as I Do" Calls for Working of Both Arms and Legs—Head Counts for Fifth.

For all those children who are fond of a little exercise no better game than this can be chosen. When the chairs are placed in order round the room, the first player commences by saying: "My master bids you do as I do," at the same time working away with the right hand as if hammering at his knees. The second player then asks: "What does he bid me do?" The second player, working in the same manner, must turn to his left-hand neighbor and carry on the same conversation, and so on until every one is working away with the right hand.

The second time of going round the order is to work with two, then both hands must work; then with three, when both hands and one leg must work; then with four, when both hands and both legs must work; lastly, with five, when both legs, both arms and the head must be kept going. Should any of the players fall in keeping in constant motion a forfeit may be claimed.

Story for Children.

When you think you are consigning a bore, or any one who irritates you beyond endurance, to a hot spot by telling him to go to blazes, it appears that you are mistaken, and that, instead of being rudely abusive, you are in fact merely blandly polite. The explanation is that once, in some far-away time, there was a good bishop named Blaize, who was always ready to dispense wise and sound advice to all applicants. Hence it grew customary to say: "Go to Blaize's."

The Difference.

"Jack the Giant Killer was a very different man from Jack the Bean Stalk."

"How different?"

"One raised beans, but the other raised thunder."

A THANKSGIVING DAY CALAMITY!



CHILDREN LEARNING TO ACT

Educational Playhouse in New York for Benefit of Untrained Working Girls and Boys.

Down deep on the East side, New York, there is a little theater that isn't a theater at all. It is an educational playhouse where shine theatrical stars just as bright as the ones along Broadway—the dream of all play people, says the New Idea Woman's Magazine.

These stars during the daytime go to school or work behind typewriting machines, or add up long columns of figures, or watch mangling machines in the laundries all the day long. Only at night do they come out and twinkle merrily to lighten weary hearts.

Until the educational theater was organized, six years ago, the only amusement accessible to the poorest of the East side were the nickelodeons, the penny arcades, the tenth-class moving picture shows of the Bowery, Houston and Grand streets.

How to get the boys and youths, the girls and young working women to sidestep the insidious Bowery show; to have instead an evening of pure, clean enjoyment—that was the question.

After many weighty considerations it was at last decided to present a real play by wholly untrained working boys and girls. Then the educational theater was organized.

When a cast is to be selected the dramatic director lets it be known and applicants flock in. Sometimes as many as 500 apply for a place in a play that requires 30 members.

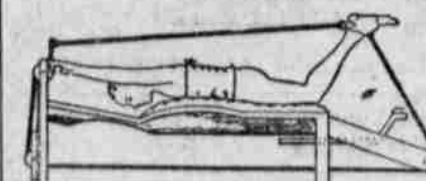
The admission to the performance is ten cents. This does not begin to defray the expenses, but that's not the idea—it's educational, and not commercial. That's the reason it's a playhouse, and not a theater.

The boy, or much more, the girl, who reaches that well-known period in life's journey finds himself or herself richer in experience, and yet, to all intents and purposes, absolutely ignorant of the real seductiveness, the real dangers and pitfalls of the commercial stage.

DEVICE TO TEACH SWIMMING

Framework Support Provided With Front and Rear Pulleys, Allowing Proper Movements.

A mechanical device for teaching persons to swim is shown in the illustration. It is a framework support provided with front and rear pulleys, elastic cables, and means for regulating the strokes of both arms and legs. The cable drawn out from the frame



Device to Teach Swimming.

by the outward stroke of the left arm draws the right leg through the proper swimming movement, and the movement of the right arm applies the same action to the left leg. The elastic cable underneath the frame restores the limbs of the pupil to their initial position after each movement. Means are provided to prevent a downward stroke of the arms and to limit the downward stroke of the legs.

Writing Tricks.

Can you write your name with your left hand? It is a good thing to know how, in case you ever hurt your right hand.

Can you write a looking-glass letter? That always amuses children, so if you have a friend who is ill send her a looking-glass letter to cheer her up. Practice by writing on a piece of paper held in front of a mirror, and soon you will find it is quite easy to do looking-glass writing. Looking-glass writing is done backwards, so that it looks all right when it is held to the mirror. Also see if you can write your name backwards—that is, begin at the last stroke and go back to the first—and as a last trick try to write your name upside down. That is not at all easy, but copy your signature upside down and you will be able to do it quite well after a little practice.

After you can do all these things learn to write a good clear hand in the proper way, like a sensible person.